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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Thirteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 28 November 1995, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. GRISSA

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 4) (continued)

Third periodic report of Ukraine (E/1994/104/Add.4; E/C.12/1995/LQ.3/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Kaskevich, Mr. Slipchenko, Mr. Nadtochiv, Mr. Shamshur, Ms. Krzhevina, Mr. Samashko and Mr. Zozulia (Ukraine) took places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed the delegation of Ukraine and said that the Committee had before it Ukraine's third periodic report, in document E/1994/104/Add.4; the Committee's list of issues, in document E/C.12/1995/LQ.3/Rev.1; and Ukraine's replies to the points raised in the list of issues, in a document without a symbol.

3. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine), introducing his country's third periodic report, said that since Ukraine had become independent four years ago the Government had been faced with the two-fold task of transforming the country from a totalitarian State into a democracy and of moving from a centrally-planned to a market economy. The economic situation was particularly serious because after independence Ukraine had inherited a structurally deformed economy. Furthermore, beginning in 1991, prices of imported energy resources had risen sharply. Taking into account external and internal inflation, over the four years industrial energy prices had increased 30,000 to 40,000 times. Because of the high industrial energy consumption and the arrangements for supplying industries with energy resources and imported raw materials, the country's balance-of-trade deficit and indebtedness had been growing since 1992. In conditions of inflation and a budget deficit, the authorities had tried to maintain the standard of living, adopting social programmes to maintain the viability of particular sectors and workers' jobs at a time when production levels had fallen significantly, as well as programmes intended to protect particular population groups. It had also been necessary to meet the cost of making good the effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

4. Those adverse factors had led to a crisis in the financial and credit system and to a worsening of the situation with regard to investment, foreign trade and social services, ending in a lower standard of living. An analysis of the economic and social situation in Ukraine required qualitatively new approaches and decisive action. In October 1994 a new reform strategy had been proposed by the President. It provided for a liberalization of pricing and wage policy, the privatization of medium-sized and large State enterprises, the attainment of financial stability by cutting the budget deficit, and the implementation of a clear and balanced credit policy, on the basis of which a strong social programme would be carried out. The defence of basic economic, social and cultural rights was taking on even greater significance as the economic restructuring programme moved ahead.

5. The current intensive legislative process included a review of earlier legislation on human rights with a view to securing their effective and appropriate application. The Government intended to carry out that work in coordination with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the appropriate bodies of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe.

6. Human rights issues held an important place in the measures provided for in the new Constitution. Legislation enacted in July 1995 had introduced changes in the labour laws. It guaranteed free choice of occupation, free State assistance in choosing suitable work and job placement in accordance with a worker's vocation, capabilities and occupational training, in the light of social requirements; the supply of appropriate work to graduates of institutes of higher education and professional training; free training of unemployed persons for new occupations, with payment of grants; compensation for expenditure incurred in connection with going to work in another locality; and legal protection from discrimination in recruitment and from unlawful dismissal, as well as assistance in maintaining employment. The changes also regulated the labour relations of Ukrainian citizens working outside Ukraine and of foreign citizens working in Ukraine. In that connection, Ukraine had concluded bilateral treaties on employment and social protection issues with many States. The changes also provided for public programmes for the recruitment of school-leavers, job quotas for young people, and arrangements for programmes to be implemented by all enterprises, institutions and organizations. Provision was further made for the placement in a first job of persons aged 15 to 28 following completion of their education, training or military service. Also, youth organizations were to participate in the review of labour and general social issues affecting young people. Lastly, the right of workers to take part in the management of enterprises, institutions and organizations through the bodies authorized to represent them and to make proposals for the improvement of work and on questions of a social and cultural nature had been strengthened.

7. A whole range of measures relating to the right to work had been introduced to strengthen the motivation of the workforce, to prevent mass unemployment, to eliminate the "black market" in labour, to solve the problems of part-time work and to finance the creation of jobs. Encouragement of small- and medium-sized enterprises and self-employment was one of the priority trends in employment policy, since those forms of production were capable of absorbing significant numbers of workers leaving large enterprises. However, extremely rapid privatization of small- and medium-sized enterprises was necessary for that purpose. Unfortunately, as a result of the lack of the necessary capital and population resources, the inadequate development of the banking facilities and difficulties with the organization of proper controls to secure fair participation by the whole of the population in the privatization process, public auctions could not be resorted to and non-traditional approaches had to be found. For that purpose the Government had introduced changes in the privatization programme, simplifying it by means of "certificates of privatization". The President had issued a decree to speed up the privatization process and, as a result, the question of small-scale privatization had become a matter of State policy.

of assistance were provided for persons of no fixed abode, refugees and needy migrants through hostels and also through building, house purchase and other loans.

19. In implementing the projected programmes for the protection of economic, social and cultural rights, Ukraine enjoyed the technical and financial assistance of international organizations, including financial institutions, and also assistance provided under joint programmes with the United States of America, France, Germany and other countries. The Ukrainian Government greatly appreciated that assistance and hoped that it would be increased.

20. The CHAIRPERSON invited members to comment on the report by groups of issues and by articles of the Covenant.

General information (Issues Nos. 1-10)

21. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) said that the new Constitution under preparation provided the legal foundation for the protection of citizens' rights, based on international models. Ukraine intended to accept an Optional Protocol to the Covenant permitting the submission of communications.

22. Mr. AHMED said he wished to place on record his appreciation of the Ukrainian delegation's frank exposé of the critical economic situation facing the country and of the adverse consequences for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. On page 6 of its written replies to the additional questions, the delegation acknowledged that the realization of those rights was currently limited by the economic condition of the country. Likewise, on page 10, it acknowledged that the wage level of a significant proportion of workers did not allow them fully to meet their needs. From paragraphs 37 and 38 of the replies, however, it could be seen that the State had a strategy to secure application of those rights, in the form of the programmes it was preparing in such matters as housing, resettlement of deportees and the cultural rights of minorities, programmes that would be implemented once the economic situation had improved.

23. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN thanked the Ukrainian delegation for its written replies, which might none the less have been submitted more promptly. The statement, to be found on page 6, that at the present time the realization of socio-economic, political and personal rights was limited only by the economic conditions of the country, seemed on the face of things to be harmless. On closer scrutiny, however, it might be taken to imply that the Government was entitled to postpone realization of those rights until the economy had improved. In point of fact, it was precisely when economic conditions were at their worst that the State needed to marshal its resources in order to protect the rights of its people. Protection of economic, social and cultural rights went hand in hand with measures to improve the economy.

24. Mr. SIMMA said he endorsed the substance of Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan's remarks: it was at times of economic hardship that the Covenant came into its own, by obliging Governments to accord particular attention to those groups that were most vulnerable in circumstances of economic change. The Committee's

consideration of Ukraine's third periodic report should focus on the question of what steps had been taken to protect those most severely hit by the economic crisis.

25. The section of the replies on the general legal framework within which human rights were protected had little to say regarding the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, as opposed to civil and political rights. Were the former justiciable, in the sense that citizens could bring a case before the courts on the basis of rights enunciated in the Covenant? Did the prevailing economic conditions affect the possibility of invoking those rights in the court? Lastly, the Ukrainian delegation appeared not to have replied to question No. 10 in the list of issues (E/C.12/1995/LQ.3/Rev.1). Had the various Ministries consulted non-governmental organizations and taken account of their opinions in drafting the report?

26. Mr. CEAUSU said that a frank acknowledgement of the current economic and social difficulties, such as had been provided by the Ukrainian delegation, was a prerequisite for the adoption by the Government of successful programmes and measures to tackle those difficulties. Paragraph 4 of the replies contained detailed information on Ukrainian legislation. How, in practice, was that legislation implemented? Could the delegation provide information on the practice of the courts, jurisprudence and the frequency with which that legislation was invoked?

27. According to paragraph 5 of the replies, the exercise of rights and freedoms by citizens must not prejudice the interests of society or of the State or the rights of other citizens. That proviso did not fully reflect the provisions of the Covenant. Who was competent to determine what the interests of society were? Paragraph 5 also enumerated the socio-economic, political and personal rights guaranteed by the Constitution. However, he could find no reference to the right to establish trade unions or the right to strike. Were those rights incorporated in other legislation? According to paragraph 6 of the replies, in trying cases the courts were guided by the appropriate codes and other legislative texts of Ukraine and by those international instruments which had been concluded and duly ratified by the Supreme Council and constituted an integral part of national legislation. Was there any constitutional text stipulating that such international human rights instruments were automatically incorporated in Ukraine's domestic legislation?

28. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that the Ukrainian delegation appeared not to have provided a reply to issue No. 8 (E/C.12/1995/LQ.3/Rev.1), concerning the promotion of awareness of the rights set out in the Covenant. She also asked for clarification of the paragraph in the written replies referring to the age structure, which seemed to imply that only 20.3 per cent of the population were of working age.

29. Mr. ADEKUOYE noted that the State of Ukraine's economy largely determined the extent to which the Government had been able to comply with the provisions of the Covenant. At one time Ukraine had been involved in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with a view to obtaining loans to

restructure its economy. Was Ukraine still eligible for IMF loans? Had it obtained any such loans in the past four years? If so, what were the amounts of the loans, and what conditionalities were attached?

30. Reference was made in paragraph 33 of the third periodic report (E/1994/104/Add.4) to passports and residence permits. Did citizens of Ukraine still need passports and residence permits in order to move from one city to another? As to the structure of the population, women outnumbered men, but between 1990 and 1994 the number of males had increased by 1 per cent, while the number of females had risen by only 0.2 per cent. Was that more rapid increase in the male population in any way connected with the structural changes in Ukraine's economy over the same period?

31. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked what was being done to alleviate the effects of declining economic activity and hyper-inflation on the most vulnerable group namely, the 22 per cent of the population - largely women - who were over retirement age. In times of economic hardship, it was also important that the burden should be shared equally among all sectors of the population. Had the adverse economic circumstances affected all of Ukraine's many ethnic groups to an equal extent, or had some groups been more severely affected than others?

32. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) thanked members for acknowledging his delegation's attempt to provide a truly objective picture of the economic reality in Ukraine. Nothing was to be gained from attempting to embellish that reality. It could be seen from the statistics contained in the written replies that standards of living had deteriorated and that new problems had arisen in Ukrainian society over the past four years. However, as a result of a policy designed to secure, if not an improvement, at least stabilization, of the economic situation, the main indicators suggested that it would be possible to halt the fall in production, with concomitant social benefits. Some slight growth in production was expected by 1996 and statistics for the first nine months of 1995 showed that, for the first time in recent years, real incomes were outstripping the rate of inflation, by some 7 per cent.

33. Those statistics pointed to some sort of stabilization. Furthermore, implementation of appropriate policies by the Government and the judiciary had finally managed to bring about political stability, reflected in the conclusion of the constitutional agreement between Parliament and the President.

34. In reply to Mr. Adekuoye, he said that Ukraine was indeed cooperating with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ukraine fortunately being considered by the international financing institutions to be in a position to repay loans. Soft loans for more than $4 billion from the World Bank were repayable over eight years or more.

35. With regard to the question by Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan about the mortality and birth rates, the disturbingly low birth rate was due largely to people's reluctance to have children on account of the deteriorating economic situation and the effects of the Chernobyl accident. Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño's understanding that only 23 per cent of the population was of working age was due to a typographical or translation error and he would submit the correct

figures at a later juncture. The point being made was that the high proportion of the population over working age placed a heavy burden on the working population.

36. He shared the view of Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan, Mr. Ahmed and others that, in times of economic difficulty, the State should give priority attention to the needs of those most affected by hardship. To do so, however, the Government needed to focus efforts on improving production so that the requisite resources would be available. Over 70 per cent of the State budget went either directly or indirectly on social protection. In a context of scant resources, investment in Ukraine was badly needed and hence the appeal to international organizations and financing institutions for assistance in promoting investment. The economic situation had to be at least normalized in order to allocate funds specifically for social programmes. An example of the escalation of Ukraine's debt had been the enormous increase in the cost of imported energy. In that connection, the country was now increasingly relying on its own energy sources. It was servicing its foreign debt and would continue to do so.

37. As to Mr. Simma's question about the involvement of various Ministries and NGOs in the drafting of Ukraine's report, the composition of the delegation bore witness to interministerial cooperation. Wide-ranging consultations had also been held with NGOs and representatives of employer and employee organizations.

38. There were 15 trade union associations - self-declared, so to speak, and formed on a voluntary basis, for there was no specific legislation on their establishment. There was no State involvement or interference and he had no problems to report in that area. Trade union rights were still governed by the former Soviet labour legislation, but a new bill, drafted after consultation with ILO in accordance with international standards and covering all aspects of labour legislation, was at the final reading stage in Parliament.

39. With reference to Mr. Ceausu's questions, under the Code of Civil Procedure anyone who deemed that his rights had been infringed or complained of an unjustified or unlawful act by a public official could go to court. There was indeed a substantial body of case-law - unfortunately so, since that showed that there was considerable room for improvement in Ukraine's legislation. A tripartite commission, with representatives of the Government, workers and employees, was currently working on the development of a new Code of Labour Laws based on international standards and practice and Ukraine's obligations under international instruments. He could confirm that Ukraine had adopted a law stipulating that, in the event of a conflict between international and domestic legislation, the former took precedence over the latter, thereby ensuring that Ukraine complied with its obligations under international treaties. He could assure the Committee that the various Ministries, including the Ministry of Labour, issued a number of publications to publicize the rights set out in the Covenant. The Committee's proceedings and the issues it addressed received objective coverage in the media.

40. The system of residence permits in operation under the former regime was considered discriminatory and much had now changed, an example being the abolition of any limitation on the number of such permits. It was a delicate issue, however, and could not be resolved overnight. The passport system, for instance, whereby migration was recorded, was still in existence, but legal measures should perhaps be adopted to change the system. In practice, now that there were no restrictions, the question of the right to choose one's place of residence came down to whether or not one could afford property elsewhere. The whole issue was tied in with the availability of State housing, a situation which had changed considerably. State housing was now provided only to very few people, such as the very poor or victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

41. It was true that women accounted for a higher proportion of older persons, mainly because the male population had been decimated during the Second World War. As for Mr. Wimer Zambrano's question about assistance to war victims, legislation introduced in 1994 had improved the situation of war widows. The allowances they received were not very large, but the State was doing its utmost with the resource constraints it had to face.

42. Economic hardship affected all sectors of the population, but in practice some ethnic groups might be marginally more seriously affected than the majority group. A case in point was that of deportees now returning to Ukraine, such as the Crimean Tatars, who might have difficulty in finding jobs and housing. Another disadvantaged group was the community of Bulgarians living in the south-west, where industry was very poorly developed. The Government was endeavouring to remedy the situation with the programmes it had introduced. As for the representation of ethnic groups in public life, elections to Parliament were governed by a proportional system based on territorial or regional, and not ethnic, representation. In the Government, of course, all regions were represented.

43. Mr. ADEKUOYE requested further clarification concerning the question of passports and residence permits. As he understood it, formerly, in order to move from one part of the country to another, a person had been required to have a passport and a residence permit, failing which he would be treated as an illegal immigrant and sent back home. Did that practice continue? The answer given by the representative of Ukraine to the effect that a person could choose his place of residence if he could afford to buy property elsewhere did not seem to cover the case of, say, someone who could not afford to buy a house but wished to move elsewhere to look for an apartment or stay with friends.

44. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) pointed out, first, that the situation in the past had not been as bleak as might have appeared. Although movements had been strictly controlled by the State, there had been no forcible returns or deportations. Today, those restrictions had been removed, but certain practical problems remained. In the past, one reason for people wishing to move to the larger cities, for instance, was that the State had artificially created certain benefits for the capital cities which were not available in other parts of the country. The problem was largely an economic one, and improvements to the economy were helping to solve it. People did not have to

buy a house or apartment in order to live in a particular place; they could exchange or rent an apartment, or live in communal housing belonging to the enterprise for which they worked, a system that was still in operation in order to compensate for low wages. Another housing issue was the need to resettle people from the Chernobyl area, for whom the State was endeavouring to find accommodation.

45. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO asked for further information about the sequels to the Chernobyl accident in terms of plans for resettlement and territorial infrastructure in Chernobyl and the surrounding areas, and also measures to protect those resettling in the area. An article he had read described in general terms the steps that had been taken by the Government, including the founding of a new city, which was apparently functioning well, the main problem being that nothing was known about the long-term effects of the accident.

46. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) explained that, following the terrible accident in 1986, access to what was termed the "30-kilometre zone" around Chernobyl had been sealed off. Now, after the necessary deactivation measures, the power station was still partly functioning. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring mechanisms had found that there was currently no health hazard for the operators who went there on turns of duty. Problems concerning leakages from the sarcophagus were being solved in cooperation with international agencies. Meanwhile, the international community had raised the question of the closure of the power station and discussions were being held with the European Union on the procedures for closure. The parts affected by the disaster had been classified in four zones, ranging from the area immediately surrounding the power station, which was to remain uninhabited, to the outlying area, which the population would not be leaving. Specific immediate and longer-term measures and programmes and resettlement programmes existed for the population of the zone concerned. The consequences of the accident placed a very significant additional burden on the Ukrainian economy, since virtually every enterprise and organization in Ukraine was required to contribute 12 per cent of its wage packet to the Chernobyl Fund, on which the Government drew for its assistance and rehabilitation measures.

47. Another factor which weighed heavily on the social and economic circumstances of the people of Ukraine was the substantial burden on the Ukrainian budget stemming from the efforts required to address the needs of returning deportees, namely the Crimean Tatars and ethnic Germans and Greeks.

48. Mr. SLIPCHENKO (Ukraine) said that an international conference on the medical aspects of the Chernobyl disaster had recently been held in Geneva and had attracted an unprecedented number of experts on the subject. The problems dealt with would be taken up again at the conference to be held next year in Vienna to mark the tenth anniversary of the disaster. The main conclusion drawn at the conference was that the need for extensive international cooperation to deal with the consequences of the disaster was as great as ever. In Ukraine, the disaster had affected 3.5 million people in an area of approximately 40,000 sq. km. Eight per cent of the national budget was set aside each year to defray the expenses of projects relating to the disaster.

Article 1: Right of peoples to self-determination (Issue No. 11)

49. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) said that, under special legislation, the State guaranteed all national minorities the right to national cultural autonomy. Crimea had been declared an autonomous republic and given its own parliament and government. Certainly the right of peoples to self-determination was a delicate issue, but fortunately the Government so far had been able to settle peacefully any problems that had arisen. It hoped to be able to continue to do so in future.

50. Mr. AHMED said he, too, hoped that such problems could be resolved peacefully in the future. He would like further details about the rationale behind the proposal mooted by the Crimean parliament some time ago to hold a referendum on the issue of dual citizenship for ethnic Russians. Through the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) the parliament had finally been persuaded not to go ahead with the referendum. Moreover, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities had written to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine urging him to ensure a peaceful and speedy settlement of the difficulties encountered by many ethnic Russians regarding the pension they received from the Russian Federation. The High Commissioner had also recommended that the case of Crimeans who, since returning to the Ukraine had not yet been granted citizenship and were thus unable to exercise their political rights, should also be looked into. The High Commissioner had further suggested the establishment of a conciliatory body to resolve such problems. He would welcome more information on the situation of the Crimean Tatars and other ethnic minorities in the Ukraine, since the delegation had mentioned that they bore the brunt of the current economic crisis.

51. The CHAIRPERSON said that it was important to draw a distinction between Crimean Tatars and other minority groups in Ukraine.

52. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) said that, although the Crimean problem had flared up in the 1940s, it had existed for several centuries; since Crimea had been colonized by several different powers. The complexity of the situation was compounded by the fact that at present half the population of the autonomous republic was of Russian origin. It was not unknown to find settlements of Ukrainians on the territory of other countries, yet they did not claim dual citizenship. There was nothing to prevent Crimean Tatars and members of other minorities which historically had lived in the Crimea, including Greeks and Germans, from returning to their homeland. The most serious problems currently facing the authorities were economic, including the question of how to provide adequate housing and employment for such people.

53. Another different problem was that of people formerly connected with the Soviet Black Sea fleet who now found themselves living in the territory of Ukraine. All people living in Ukraine were entitled to a State pension. However, people were receiving a Russian pension in roubles and buying their food in Ukraine; it should be possible for those in receipt of a Ukrainian pension and living abroad to do likewise. He would emphasize that such problems must be resolved legally. The periodic report mentioned a number of agreements signed with other countries concerning, inter alia, employment conditions and pensions. Russia had been one of the first countries with

which Ukraine had entered into such an agreement and must honour its obligations thereunder. Accordingly, while the High Commissioner's recommendations in that respect would be taken into account, such problems could only be resolved in conformity with the provisions of the international agreements concerned.

54. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, sought confirmation that, under the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and Ukraine regarding the Crimea, Crimean Tatars who had been forcibly deported during the Second World War would be allowed to return to their homeland.

55. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) said that, admittedly, prior to 1991 few people had questioned to whom Crimea belonged. It had become part of Ukraine in 1954, following historical events which were familiar to all, and had remained as such, in compliance with the Helsinki Accords. If the borders between Ukraine and the Russian Federation were tampered with now, simply because there were ethnic Ukrainians in certain provinces of the Russian Federation or vice versa, it could only lead to needless conflicts. Perhaps the safest course was to accept the events of the past 50 to 60 years and maintain the status quo. Problems still arose regarding the Black Sea fleet; however, during talks held in the past week between the Ukrainian Minister for Defence and his Russian counterpart a number of compromise solutions had been reached. Moreover, he was convinced that the only way to deal with problems relating to the Crimea lay in peaceful negotiations and compromise solutions, in the light of the interests of all parties concerned. A draft constitution for the autonomous republic had recently been drawn up and was now being examined jointly by Crimean and Ukrainian members of Parliament. It would undoubtedly go a long way to solving some of the more thorny issues.

56. Mr. SLIPCHENKO (Ukraine) confirmed that Crimean Tatars were entitled to return to their homeland, which was now part of Ukraine. Some 250,000 Tatars had already returned and the repatriation process was expected to continue.

Article 3: Equality between men and women (Issues Nos. 13-14)

57. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN said that the country analysis on Ukraine prepared by the Centre for Human Rights indicated that unemployment was very high among women, a fact which had been borne out by the delegation. According to the sources available, in 1992 9 out of 10 women were unemployed. Had the situation improved at all of late? It was further alleged in the country analysis that, although equal pay was stipulated under Ukrainian legislation, women were seldom found in top managerial positions or in politics. In general, there seemed to be little understanding of what was meant by discrimination against women, and womens' rights activities were few and far between. Was that indeed the case, and if so, what steps was the Government taking to rectify the situation?

58. Ms. TAYA, picking up on Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan's remarks, said that according to available information, the unemployment rate among women was much higher than among men, yet Ukraine's report did not refer to unemployment as a serious problem. Moreover, it had not provided data on unemployment with a breakdown according to gender. Presumably, the rate of hidden unemployment

among women was much higher than among men. For instance, how did the Government account for the very high rate of unpaid leave among women? What measures were being taken by the Government to make sure that conditions relating to unpaid leave/dismissal were applied equally to men and women? Lastly, were factors such as household income taken into account in authorizing unpaid leave/dismissal in the current economic climate?

59. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO inquired whether the Government had observed a resurgence of violence against women in Ukraine, since such incidents tended to increase during an economic recession.

60. Mr. KASKEVICH (Ukraine) confirmed that unemployment chiefly affected women and young people. As far as women were concerned, the situation was certainly improving: approximately 7 out of 10 women were now unemployed, as compared with 9 out of 10 some years ago. However, it should be borne in mind that 56 per cent of the current workforce consisted of women. He wondered whether that was appropriate; perhaps it would be better if women devoted more time to the family, their children and the overall cultural development of the nation. He was thankful that of the 100,000 or so people officially registered as unemployed, 70,000 were women. It would be far worse if the majority were men. How would they support their families?

61. As to women in positions of responsibility, unlike other countries, Ukraine had no women at the forefront of politics. However, women did hold high-ranking positions elsewhere. For instance, two of the three Deputy Ministers at the Ministry of Labour were women. The chief of a subdivision at the Ministry of the Economy was a woman and also a member of the delegation. Admittedly, the situation could be improved with reforms of the electoral system and legislation on State institutions. Undoubtedly, such inequalities would be eliminated in future.

62. As to women's issues, a wide range of activities were in hand as a result of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen. There had even been a parliamentary hearing on women's issues, which had highlighted the many shortcomings in State policy and legislation regarding women. Furthermore, Ukraine had participated actively in the recent World Conference on Women and a government decree had been adopted to ensure the follow-up. Not all problems could be resolved immediately and so target dates had been set for the attainment of certain goals by the various Ministries concerned. It was worth noting that women had been largely responsible for the preparations, participation and follow-up in connection with such events. Furthermore, a special committee had recently been set up to promote women's issues.

63. Replying to Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño, he confirmed that the economic crisis tended to hit hard at the most vulnerable members of society, namely women and children. Official crime statistics indicated that there had been a sharp rise in cases of violence over the past three years. The situation was now stabilizing, inter alia, because of the introduction of a special programme to combat crime that included a wide range of measures to protect the interests and rights of women. He sincerely hoped that the programme would help to bring an end to the scourge of violence against women.

64. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN said that she was not entirely satisfied with the replies given by the Ukrainian delegation regarding the situation of women and reserved the right to revert to the issue at a future meeting. She was also disturbed by the comment to the effect that women might be better off staying at home.

65. Ms. TAYA said the delegation had not provided sufficient information in reply to her question regarding unpaid leave. She hoped that it would be supplied at a later meeting.

66. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO also expressed concern at the suggestion that women should take a back seat and allow men to be the breadwinners.

The meeting rose at 1.00 p.m.